

**MEDIA DISCOURSE AND THE PRODUCTION OF
MEANING
ANALYSIS OF THE IRAQ WAR 2003 IN MALAYSIAN
AND BRITISH NEWSPAPERS**

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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Abstrak

Peperangan sebagai peristiwa berita merupakan peperangan ideologi yang bukan sahaja melibatkan perang mulut tetapi juga perang bersenjata. Usaha memberi makna berkaitan peperangan sebagai bahan berita berlaku dalam dua tahap; secara terang-terangan dan secara terselindung. Dari sudut pandangan mudah, akhbar dilihat sebagai alat perjuangan berideologi yang dikawal oleh golongan elit politik, namun kajian ini berpandangan bahawa akhbar lahir daripada masyarakat dan budaya yang menunjangi media tersebut. Pemahaman mengenai makna yang dihasilkan media mungkin boleh menjawab persoalan tentang perbezaan berita. Justeru, liputan berita peperangan Iraq pada tahun 2003 oleh akhbar di Britain dan di Malaysia, khususnya dari 20 Mac 2003 hingga 15 April 2003 (26 hari) mendasari data untuk kajian ini. Sejumlah 1033 buah artikel berita dikutip; 242 daripada *News Straits Times (NST)* dari Malaysia, manakala 791 artikel daripada *The Daily Telegraph (DT)* dari Britain. Sejumlah 194 pucuk surat kepada editor daripada tempoh masa yang sama turut dianalisis. Kajian ini mengupayakan pendekatan yang diusul oleh Fairclough yang menggabungkan analisis teks dengan penjelasan yang mengaitkan teks berita sebagai produk organisasi berita, masyarakat dan budaya. Dapatan kajian menyarankan bahawa amalan pemberitaan organisasi berita jelas dilakukan mengikut agenda berita yang seiring dengan fahaman ideologi organisasi tersebut. Masyarakat dan budaya pula mempengaruhi teks berita pada tahap yang lebih terselindung. Namun begitu, pengaruh mereka masih kuat dalam pemberian makna perang. Dapatan kajian juga turut memberi ruang untuk penilaian semula kerangka tiga dimensi Fairclough. Teks (bentuk, kandungan dan penggunaan bahasa) sebagai fokus utama kajian ini membolehkan corak amalan organisasi, amalan masyarakat dan amalan budaya diperincikan bagi memerihalkan cara kita sebagai anggota masyarakat menghasilkan berita yang berbeza.

Kata kunci: Analisis wacana kritis, Wacana media, Peperangan Iraq, Kajian rentas budaya media

Abstract

War as a news event is an ideological struggle consisting a war both of ideas and of arms. Meaning-making activities associated with war as a news event operate at two different levels; one is overt, the other is covert. A simplistic perspective might explain newspapers as a tool of ideological struggle that elites control, but this study takes the perspective that newspapers are also the product of the society and culture under which the media operate. Understanding the meanings of media texts can help answer the question of why news differs. Data for this research was the news coverage of the 2003 Iraq war from two newspapers. A total of 1033 news articles were collected from March 20th 2003 to April 15th 2003, a period of 26 days; the sample included 242 news articles from the Malaysian newspaper, *New Straits Times (NST)* and 791 news articles from British newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph (DT)*. Because these newspapers also published letters to the editor, a total of 194 letters from the same time period were available to analyze. Utilizing Fairclough's (1995b) approach, this study combined textual analysis with relevant explanations and illustrated how news texts were products of the news organization, society and culture. The findings suggested that news organizations set their news agendas along ideological lines, and the newsgathering practices were made to follow those lines. Society and culture influenced news texts on a more concealed level, but were no less influential in sustaining the meanings of war. The findings provided the opportunity to review and extend Fairclough's (1995b) three-dimensional framework on news text. With text (form, content and language use) placed at the centre of the study, patterns of organizational, societal and cultural practices could be extracted to show how different groups produce different news.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, Media discourse, Iraq war, Cross-cultural media studies

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List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of the South East Asian Nations
BN	Barisan National (National Front)
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DAP	Democratic Alliance Party
DT	The Daily Telegraph
EU	European Union
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
NST	New Straits Times
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PAS	Parti Islam SeMalaysia (Islamic Party of Malaysia)
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
UN	United Nations

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 MEDIA DISCOURSE AND MEDIA RESEARCH

Compared to the West, media research in Malaysia is still in its infancy (Nain, 2000) and has not shown breadth and depth, especially in terms of quantity and quality. For example, there is a decided lack of research projects on how Malaysian newspapers differ in terms of their coverage of national events and people that are outside of their immediate culture despite Malaysia's socio-cultural condition. The research projects that have so far been done in academia can be said to fall into four categories (Nain, 2000): those that concentrate on quantitative aspect of the media especially those related to audience reception and media effects themes; research that focus on areas of media policies and their effect on the media; media manipulation and government's use of the media; and research that focus on refining methodological issues in media research. For Nain (2000), this trend shows that Malaysian media research lag behind that of the west since the methods and approaches are far from innovative. They invariably employed quantitative approach and social surveys that tend to categorize the audience from the institutional perspectives. Nain (2000) also opines that the studies failed to show enough awareness of the ideological elements. Furthermore, their findings are mostly sympathetic to the official view of the media. Nain (2000, p. 146) acknowledges that the situation is socio-cultural in nature since "Malaysia's conservative education system" that advocates "conformity and compliance" can complicate attempts to critically assess Malaysian media.

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